

Striking NJ Transit engineers deserve every dime they can claw from management and the politicians in Trenton. For some time, working people in New Jersey have been drowning in a sea of rising prices—now compounded by the chaos of on-and-off tariffs and an economy stumbling toward recession. NJ Transit itself is a symbol of the country's sinking status: stagnant pay, fare hikes and service cuts, combined with an aging train fleet and crumbling Pennsylvania Railroad infrastructure. The picture is not pretty for either frontline workers or the riding public. Most engineers cannot afford to live in Hoboken or Manhattan or other places they serve, while delays, cancellations and safety hazards abound. How to break out of this mess?

The engineers have brought trains to a halt to gain wage parity with LIRR. That is a start. By standing strong, they have opened the door to a real win for themselves and the labor movement. But the BLET/Teamsters leadership has kept their struggle isolated, including from other sections of the NJT workforce, BLET members at other passenger rail lines and commuters—in short, from engineers' natural allies. And the NJT bosses and Governor Phil Murphy are taking full advantage of this isolation to bully engineers and their union negotiators into settling for less.

The forces on NJT's side are playing all manner of dirty divide-and-rule tricks. They blame the engineers for refusing the same meager wage increases as other NJT rail workers received. They blame the engineers for disrupting the lives and livelihoods of the ridership. They blame the engineers for ignoring "fiscal reality" where supposedly only so much is available to go around. This from officials in a state notorious for its "pay to play" politics! But the BLET leadership's response to these lies in each and every case is simply to apolo-



gize for the inconvenience and declare that they want engineers to get their "fair share" and nothing more.

This won't cut it. The divide-and-rule must be aggressively combated by drawing wider layers into the struggle. NJ Transit CEO Kolluri invokes the "me too" clauses in other NJT rail union contracts to insist that the money for wage increases across the board is not there. So, reach out to the other rail unions to join the pickets to help improve compensation and work conditions for all. The ATU tentative agreement in NJT's bus division is not yet ratified. So, appeal to bus and light rail workers to fight for better alongside rail—which would throw a monkey wrench in management's contingency plan. The NJT bosses want to peg wages to the old, long-expired contract between the LIRR and BLET. So, go to LIRR and other rail and bus workers and propose to join together in struggle on both sides of the Hudson in order to bring everyone up. Let's build a solid union front and put a stop to the crossing of picket lines!

To win the support of commuters, link the fight for better wages to better service and safety under union control. The NJT bosses upgrade their offices but nothing that matters. The Democrat Murphy, who rode into office promising to save NJT, has done nothing more to rebuild than his predecessor, Republican Chris Christie. But he is busy scapegoating the engineers for the state's criminal neglect of commuter rail. It is clear that NJT will be saved only if the unions take charge of the situation and ensure the necessary resources are invested in the system. A fight along these lines right now by engineers would not only be the surest way to win their economic demands and turn around NJT, but also put them in the strongest position to defend those gains against future attack.

Read *Workers Vanguard*, Marxist newspaper of the Central Committee of the SL/U.S.: [workersvanguard.org](http://workersvanguard.org)

Spartacist League/U.S., section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116 • (212) 732-7860 • [icli.org](http://icli.org) • [vanguard@tiac.net](mailto:vanguard@tiac.net) • [@WorkersVanguard](https://x.com/WorkersVanguard)